



**For Immediate Release
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WATSON POND STATE PARK IN TAUNTON REOPENS FOR PUBLIC SWIMMING

Today, Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) Commissioner Stephen H. Burrington, State Senator Marc R. Pacheco, State Representatives James H. Fagan, Stephen R. Canessa and Patricia A. Haddad, and Taunton Mayor Robert G. Nunes celebrated the reopening of Watson Pond for public swimming.

"I am happy to announce that thanks to the efforts of Senator Pacheco and DCR staff, Watson Pond is once again open for swimming," said DCR Commissioner Stephen H. Burrington.

"The residents of southeastern Massachusetts have anxiously awaited the reopening of Watson Pond," added Senator Marc R. Pacheco, who worked tirelessly to open Watson Pond to the community. "I'm pleased that our efforts were realized in time for the warm summer months. I look forward to seeing area residents swimming, fishing and enjoying the pond this summer!"

The pond, located in Watson Pond State Park in Taunton, had been closed to swimmers since 1989 due to water quality concerns. In 2004, DCR's Lakes and Ponds Program hired GeoSyntec to analyze the beach and pond water. While the pond passed most of the water quality tests satisfactorily, GeoSyntec found that the large quantity of Canada geese droppings around the beach posed a threat to swimmers, by way of causing elevated bacteria levels in the water.

In April 2006, DCR received approval from the Taunton Conservation Commission to implement several techniques to mitigate this threat. Fencing and plantings were placed strategically around the beach to exclude geese from the swimming area. The beach sand was also entirely replaced. To prevent rainwater runoff from flowing into to pond, which would negatively impact water quality, the area behind the beach was re-graded, a filter trench was installed, and a rain garden was constructed using a system of crushed stone, filter fabric, mulch and native plants.

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“As you can see, we tried to implement natural, common-sense solutions to manage problem wildlife and to provide added beauty and water quality benefits,” said Commissioner Burrington. “DCR plans to continue this approach at many of our other parks and swimming beaches that are facing similar issues.”

“I’m thrilled to see this beautiful park made once again available to the enjoyment of all the people of southeastern Massachusetts,” said Representative James H. Fagan

“The reopening of Watson Pond marks the further expansion of recreational opportunities for Taunton residents,” commented Representative Patricia A. Haddad. “DCR has worked diligently to return this natural gem to its pristine state.”

“I am pleased to see such a valuable recreational resource reopening in our community,” said Representative Stephen R. Canessa. “Thanks to the hard work of many, Watson Pond and all of its recreational offerings can once again be enjoyed by the residents of Taunton and our surrounding communities.”

In addition to swimming, Watson Pond State Park offers fishing, picnicking, boating and hiking. To obtain a ParksPass for all DCR state parks please call 617-626-1250 or visit <http://www.mass.gov/dcr/parkspass.htm>.

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